

God Hasn't Given Up On Me, Part 1 - Romans 11:1-10 – October 14th, 2012

- Today's teaching will be part one of a series I've titled; "God Hasn't Given Up On Me."
- I'm really looking forward to this chapter that we have before us because it has the potential to be that much needed encouragement to us.
- The Apostle Paul is going to rise from the pages of Scripture, and by the Holy Spirit, show us, illustrate for us, that God won't give up on us.

Jon Courson - "Paul uses the nation Israel as an illustration that God is faithful even when His people are fickle. ...No matter what you're going through, God will be faithful to you. ... God made certain promises to the nation of Israel, which He will fulfill. For even though they've blown it badly, God has promised to see Israel through on the basis of His own ...faithfulness. The same is true for us. He who has begun a good work in us shall complete it (Php_1:6). That's His promise. And in it I rest.

1. In spite of how bad I've been (Verse 1)

- v1 Paul asks: Did God reject His people? By no means, as he himself is an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin.
- What Paul is saying is that he himself is proof that God is not through with the Jew, which is what they thought because of the Gentiles.
- In other words, if I as a Jew was not rejected, then so too will you as the Jew not be rejected either. I'm a microcosm of the Jewish nation.
- It's not so much that Paul wasn't rejected it's more how Paul wasn't rejected. By that I mean, after all that he had done, God still saved him.
- In spite of the fact he persecuted Christians, many of whom were killed as martyrs because of their profession of faith, Paul wasn't rejected.
- The bottom line is that no matter how bad I've been, or the bad I've done, it's about how good God is, and what He's done in spite of it all.

2. Regardless of who's against me (Verses 2-4)

- v2 Paul says that God didn't reject His people then asks, don't you know what Scripture says about Elijah appealing to God against Israel.
- v3 Paul quotes from 1 Kings 19 when Elijah cries out about how they killed the prophets and tore down the altars leaving only him to kill.
- v4 He says God's answer to Elijah was that He reserved for Himself seven thousand in Israel all of whom had not bowed the knee to Baal.

- Paul, in arguing his case, calls Elijah to the witness stand, as it were, as evidence proving beyond a doubt; God isn't through with the Jew.
- Elijah, who James, (5:16-18), says was so powerful and effective rain stopped and started when he prayed, failed in praying against Israel.
- Elijah testifies that even as powerful as he was in stopping the rain from coming down, he couldn't stop God's blessing from coming down.

3. Even if I've rejected Him (Verses 5-10)

- v5-6 Paul says at the present time there's a remnant chosen by grace, such that it's no longer by works. Were it, grace is no longer grace.
- v7 He asks what then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did? This led the others to become hardened of heart.
- v8-10 He quotes Isaiah 29 and Psalm 69, which say, God gave them a spirit of stupor so their eyes could not see and their ears not hear.

Psalms 69:22-23 NIV May the table set before them become a snare; may it become retribution and a trap. (23) May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.

- This begs the question of why Paul brings David into the discussion when it seems to indicate God is through with those who reject Him.
- I'm of the belief that the opposite is true, as evidenced by what we'll see when we get to verse eleven where Paul says they're recoverable.
- Be that as it may, I think we'd be grossly remiss were we not to take the time to peel back the layers of what Paul is saying here in vs. 5-10.

- Here's what I'm thinking, Paul must establish how it cannot be both grace and works, it must be either one or the other or grace isn't grace.
- Furthermore, he must call David to the witness stand as such, in order to testify how he, like Paul, lamented the hardening of the Jews.
- This table that David describes as being set before them, is God's table of blessings as descendants of Abraham and heirs of the promise.

- However, it would be this table of blessings that would become for them a snare, retribution, and a trap, or stumbling block, if you prefer.
- Paul takes it a step further and says that this blessing as God's chosen people would be that which would actually harden and blind them.
- Every time they like us will reject the Lord, it will develop this layer of callous over our hearts, and also a layer of blindness over our eyes.

- By way of illustration callous formation is caused by an accumulation of dead skin cells that harden and thicken over an area of our skin.
- Hence, this callous formation is the body's rejection as a defense mechanism to protect from the excessive pressure and friction against it.
- Using this analogy, we, in the spiritual sense, can harden our hearts against the Lord when subjected to that rubbing friction from the Lord.

The story is told of the evangelist of old by the name of Billy Sunday when once he had preached a hard sermon about sin and repentance. Of it a lady said; "Billy, you gotta quit preaching that way, you're rubbing the fur on the cat the wrong way!" To which Billy responded; "mam, the old cat is headed toward hell. If she'll turn around, then I'll rub her the right way."

- It's vital we know, God doesn't harden us, rather, friction causes the hardening whenever we reject the Word of God and the ways of God.
- In other words, when God's Word and or God's way rub us the wrong way, it's just a matter of time before we harden our hearts over time.
- Whether this describes you or it describe someone you love close to you take heart, because it's not the end of the story, God isn't through.

I'll close with what one commentator wrote concerning God's story of overflowing and never ending grace; "What do we do when people we love harden themselves against Christ? We pray, as Paul does, because we know that only God can change a person's heart, (Romans 10:1). We speak of Christ when we can, in the hope that they will listen, (Romans 10:17). But there is one other thing. The senior minister under whom I began to learn pastoral ministry often used to say, 'Remember, it's not the end of the story.' I hope I will never forget to remind myself of that. God in His grace is more patient than we are. So often there is more of the story to be told. And that 'more' is a story of overflowing grace. Sin increases, but grace increases all the more.